!: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
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241 It may be doubted whether they could cultivate any crops other than those they now sow, without extensive irrigation in the dry season, and this is incompatible with their nomadism. These crops do not make an imposing list. The staple crop is millet (*Sorghum vulgare*), from which they reap two harvests, and they sow some maize near their huts and a few beans (*Vigna*), their only garden vegetable, among the millet. Besides these three food plants they cultivate a little tobacco under the eaves of their huts and plant some gourds to grow up kraal fences. The millet is consumed as porridge and beer; the maize is mainly roasted, though some is eaten as porridge; the beans are eaten stewed or cooked with porridge; the tobacco is used for smoking in pipes, as snuff, and for chewing; and the gourds are, according to their species, either eaten or fashioned into dairy vessels.

Millet, the main crop, is the only one of these plants to the cultivation of which we need make more than a passing reference. Once it is established it stands up well to conditions which would be fatal to most plants, and it is worthy of notice that wild species of sorghum flourish in this latitude. Maize is also hardy but, although it is important to Nuer because it is the first grain to be harvested when their supplies are running short or are exhausted, its quantity is negligible except on the banks of the Baro. Nuer distinguish between many types of millet, mainly by the colour of their seeds, and know which are early, and which late, varieties, in what order they ripen, which give good flour for porridge, and which have sweet stalks for chewing. The plant thrives in black clays which hold up water, but shows much adaptability and ripens also on the more sandy stretches on which the Nuer build their villages, though in such spots it has less resistance to drought and a second sowing is very uncertain. Eastern Jikany is probably the best millet country in Nuerland, and, although in many parts it is too flooded for a second crop, it is the only section I have seen which can generally be relied on to yield sufficient grain to support the population. Lak and Thiang tribal areas in the Zeraf Island, which I have not visited, are said to be good grain country.

Even millet will not flourish in standing water, so that the

2:Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1951
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11. A maiden, smoking pipe

[facing p. 40]

2:Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1951
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

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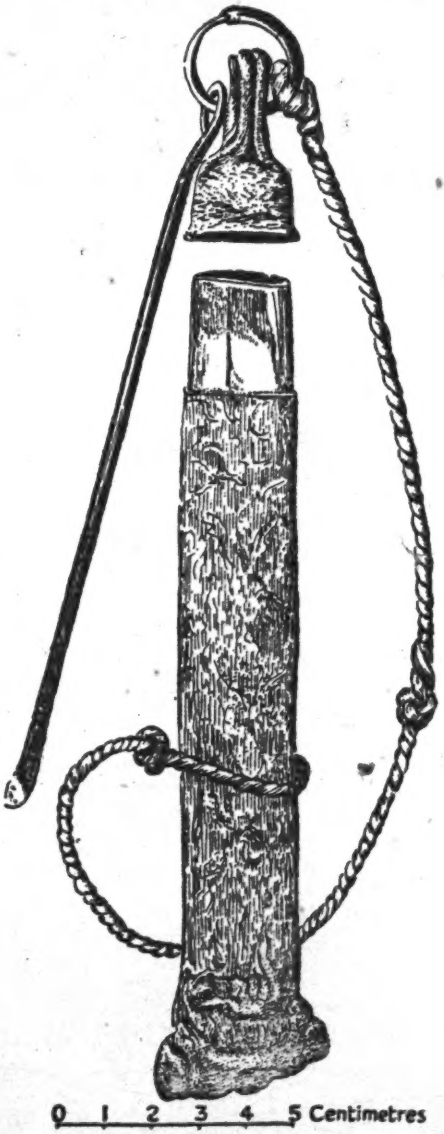

A snuff box
(Millet cane bound with the skin of a cow's tail)

14: Huffman M-5 (no date) 1931
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

occupies a place in the enclosure. Cane-stalks are generally used for fuel, although the women may go to the forest and bring wood. 354

The skin of a reed-buck is not usually seen in the Nuer home. A Nuer woman whose first child is a girl will not sit on the skin of the reed-buck as she believes sores will break out on her body if she does so. So the skin of the reed-buck is not as popular as it might be if there were no superstition attached to it. I gave a woman guest the skin of a reed-buck to sit on one day—thinking that I was honouring her, for it certainly was pretty—and was amazed at the way she suddenly sprang to her feet and got off the skin, explaining her actions by saying that her first child was a girl. 753

A visitor—if a stranger in Nuerland—is appalled by the paucity of the possessions in a Nuer family. What they have seems, even at its best, such a meagre portion of the things we think necessary for this life. Yet the wants of the Nuer are few. He wants food, a place to sleep in, cattle, at least one wife and as many more as he can possibly afford, and children. He wants also a good spear and club. These desires of his heart he wants to have supplied with the least possible effort on his own part. 181

THE WOMAN'S DAY

The day begins early for the mother. Soon after day-break she must take her large earthen jar and go to the river for water. She has a head-pad made of cane-leaves, with a hole in the middle of it—indeed, it resembles a huge doughnut. She puts this head-pad on her head and then puts the large earthen jar on top of it. She carries herself erect, occasionally putting one hand up to steady the jar. But usually she lets one hand hang down while in the other she carries her long-stemmed pipe, smoking as she goes. 512 482 [276]

by the children falls to her. When just a little girl she must take a gourd and carry water, learning to balance it on her head. She must help to care for the baby, carrying it astride one hip, with her arm around it. Cane-stalks must be brought for fuel, or she may accompany her mother when she goes to the forest to get wood. She gathers sticks of wood, binding them together with grass, and carries them home on her head. Or she may accompany her mother when she goes out to cut grass for roofing the houses. She early learns to carry her burden poised on top of her head.

As she grows older she learns to pound dura and to sift and cook it. She learns all the art of the Nuer housekeeper and, indeed, soon becomes a small replica of her mother.

The little girls play 'keeping house' and imitate their mothers to the best of their ability.

The older girls of the village usually have a house given them for sleeping quarters.

As the girl grows older she learns to smoke the family pipe and becomes as attached to it as her mother is.

When she is twelve or thirteen years old she begins to observe the age-old customs which until then she has been able to ignore. For instance, now she must never eat before a boy of her own age or older. Furthermore, she must never see him eat if there is any possibility that he may some day be a suitor for her hand in marriage.

She bleaches her hair and adorns her body with all possible ornaments. She dons her grass skirts and attends dances now. Her father and brothers are interested in giving her beads and other ornaments, for a well-favoured girl will bring more cattle when the marriage price is discussed. Her father and brothers are dictators as to what she may do and as to what plans may be made

16: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1956
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

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FIG. 1
Pipe

accompanied him to the village shook a rattle on the other side. The instrument is called *jogh*, possibly a Dinka word. It is a bottle-gourd containing seeds, in this instance the seeds of a wild leguminous plant. While the rattles were being rattled and the prophet sang hymns to *nai* the congregation clapped their hands and smacked them on their thighs in accompaniment. Nuer say that they *pat*, clap, or slap, for the spirit.

After about ten minutes' singing Rainen began to have premonitory spasms. It should be noted that it was not the sick youth but his father who became possessed during the seance. A spirit takes hold of an older and experienced man in cases of this kind and uses him as a medium to make its demands known. As the singing, rattling, and clapping continued, Rainen began to twitch and shake from head to foot and then suddenly leapt into the air and fell back on to the floor of the hut where he lay stiff as though in a paroxysm. After lying tense and prostrate for a while he sat up, but shortly afterwards collapsed again. Then for about a quarter of an hour he threw himself wildly about the hut, writhing and twitching as though in agony. He reminded me of a hen which has had its throat cut in the Muslim way, and is thrown on the ground to die. If the people around had not broken most of his falls he might have injured himself. As it was, he complained to me on the following day of the soreness of his arms and legs. Every now and again he barked like a dog. In describing these spasms Nuer say that the spirit wrestles (*kuer*) with the man it possesses.

At the end of a particularly violent seizure, Rainen, who in his exertions had divested himself of the skin over his head, sprang at the prophet, tore his rattle from his hands, and sat